


**C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy:  
A Study in Allegory**

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

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**July 1997**

**Graduation date: December 21, 1997**

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### **Abstract**

This discussion of C. S. Lewis's use of allegory focuses on his Space Trilogy, which includes *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. The paper begins with a literary biography of Lewis up to and including the Space Trilogy, and then examines the allegory Lewis employs in these three novels. Special consideration is given to the purpose and the effects of the allegory, as well as how, as the trilogy progresses, Lewis changes his techniques in using allegory.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported me throughout this endeavor, even though most of the time they had no idea what I was talking about.



Special thanks go to Jenn Parker, for she truly understands the grueling process of preparing a thesis. Her sympathy helped me infinitely.



Very special thanks to Mat Fisher who served as my mentor, encouraged me, challenged me, stretched me, and most importantly, put up with me on my Stupid Days. Without him, this thesis – and my college career – would have lacked that inexpressible extra something.

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## Introduction

My love for literature is as old as I am. I have parents and older sisters who read to me tirelessly in my youth, and when I gained the ability to read on my own, I never stopped. Summers were -- and still are -- filled with reading lists; in the past, they were given to me by teachers, but now I make them out for myself. In recent years, the lists have grown so long that I can not possibly finish them in a mere summer.

While it has been many years since I have read the Chronicles of Narnia, they have always held for me a kind of fascination. I have admired their author for as long as I can remember, even during those times when I read none of his works. In recent years, as I picked up such books as *Mere Christianity*, *The Four Loves*, and *Till We Have Faces*, my interest in the man and his works has grown. Knowing that his knowledge of literature far surpasses my own, and that his love for reading and for God at least equals mine, has made C. S. Lewis an author after my own heart. How natural, then, for me to choose him and his works as a topic for my thesis.

And yet, how ironic, as well. I have chosen to research a man who, in letters to an American woman researching Lewis as part of her dissertation to earn her Ph.D., called research "evil," a deplorable practice "first devised to attract the Americans and to emulate the scientists. But the wisest Americans," he writes, "are themselves already sick of it. . . . it is surely clear by now that the needs of the humanities are different from those of the scientists" (Hart 5). I am amused to ponder whether he would have felt the same way about the Honors Thesis.

*Note: The works by Lewis are cited by abbreviations of their titles: LCSL for Letters of C. S. Lewis; OSP for Out of the Silent Planet; Pere for Perelandra; and THS for That Hideous Strength.*

**C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy:  
A Study in Allegory**

C. S. Lewis, born in 1898, began writing at the tender age of six, focusing most of his works on a fantasy place called "Animal-Land." Decades later, Lewis is known for such masterpieces as *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and his *Space Trilogy*. How did Lewis progress from a child author to a man whose books, even three decades after his death, continue to sell hundreds of thousands of copies a year (Downing 5)?

Following his mother's death when Lewis was nine, he was sent by his father to several different boarding schools, but it was at Cherbourg School in Malvern, England where his brilliance truly began to blossom (Green & Hooper 30). From there, Lewis went on scholarship to Malvern College, but he intensely disliked this school and left (Lowenberg 2). Lewis's father, rather hoping for an educational miracle, sent him to a tutor named W. T. Kirkpatrick from whom Lewis learned to think logically and to base his arguments on reason.

While Lewis's logical thinking is evident in many of his works, he also had a great love for the imagination. George McDonald, through his *Phantasies*, taught Lewis that fantasy can be a vehicle for more serious matters. Other authors, including William Blake, Edmund Spenser, Beatrix Potter, and Walter Scott, also influenced Lewis with their use of fantasy and imagination (Walsh 12-13).

Lewis's vast knowledge of literature proved another influence upon his own writing. A scholar in classical, medieval, and Renaissance literature, as well as a man well versed in ancient mythology and legend, Lewis makes a great many allusions to others' works and stories in his own writing, as well as using ideas from his reading as a basis for some of his fiction.



Lewis's journey toward Christianity also serves as an obvious influence upon his writing. His conversion was a gradual and complex process helped along by authors such as McDonald, Spenser, Milton, and Dante, as well as friends Arthur Greeves and Owen Barfield. His path led him through many philosophies, including realism, philosophical idealism, pantheism, and theism before finally leading him to Christianity in 1931 (Lowenberg 3). His faith is evident in all of his works published after this epiphany.

In the 1930's, Lewis joined with several friends and colleagues to form a group called "Inklings" which met generally twice a week. The members of this group, which included Warren Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Christopher Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Colin Hardie, among others, read portions of books-in-progress to one another in order to hear the others' reactions, ideas, and critiques. These meetings undoubtedly resulted in not only the members' influence upon Lewis, but also Lewis's influence upon them.

Prior to penning the Space Trilogy, which includes *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis published only four works. Two of them, *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* and *Dymer*, were published before his conversion to Christianity and under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton. The other two, *The Pilgrim's Regress* and *The Allegory of Love*, were Christian apologetics, thus making the Space Trilogy Lewis's first published Christian fiction. In fact, during the years spent on the three books, Lewis published only essays and apologetics—no other fiction aside from the Trilogy itself (excluding *The Screwtape Letters*, which arguably is more an imaginative apology for Christianity rather than pure fiction). Perhaps it is for this reason that some find these novels dogmatic and didactic, being more concerned with Christianity than telling a story or creating a fictional world (Lowenberg 7). While Lewis's later

works successfully combine Christianity, myth, and romanticism, he was still learning how to incorporate his faith into his fiction when working on these books.

Most critics agree that when C. S. Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet*, he did not intend it to be the first of a trilogy. However, the novel works very well as such. The story begins with enough realism to make the fantasy seem almost plausible. While admittedly, Lewis knew precious little about space travel and the intricacies of man's reaction to weightlessness and changes in atmospheric pressure, the reader hardly notices because of Lewis's masterful descriptions of the psychological journey in the space ship. As Ransom begins to ponder that space is not at all as he had always been taught, the reader forgets the "facts" of space travel and focuses instead upon the ideas set forth. Ransom, during the thirty days of his captivity on a journey to Mars, discovers that space is not dark and empty, but instead that in comparison to the fullness and wonder of this outer world, his beloved Earth is a void (*OSP* 32). These intellectual wanderings by the protagonist change the frame of reference for the reader; one becomes less concerned with whether the descriptions are physically accurate and begins instead to consider the spiritual accuracy.

*Out of the Silent Planet* is certain to be more enjoyable to one who focuses on feelings, ideas, and philosophies than one who is intrigued by scientifically based facts. The reader experiences Ransom's fear during his kidnapping, his flight through space, and his solitary wanderings on a strange planet; the reader also observes Ransom's "coming of age" on Malacandra during the battle with the *hnakra*. Ransom, who has befriended the *hrossa*, one of the three rational species on the planet, willingly and bravely enters into the fight with the sea creature, despite his fear. He faces possible death with courage, and although

Ransom still trembles later when faced with the prospect of meeting Oyarsa, fear's paralyzing grip on him is gone (Gibson 29).

Read merely on this level, one may enjoy the change in Ransom's character and the excitement of his journeys, but completely miss the spiritual significance of the novel. In fact, many of the novel's contemporary reviewers did just that. Lewis wrote in a letter to a friend: "You will be both grieved and amused to hear that out of about 60 reviews only 2 showed any knowledge that my idea of the fall of the Bent One was anything but an invention of my own" (LCSL 167). As exaggerated as this may seem, a survey of the actual reviews of *Out of the Silent Planet* shows Lewis's estimate to be surprisingly close to the mark (Downing 36). One reviewer states that, even after reading the novel twice, he could find no allegorical significance (Kennedy 255). Another remarks that "*Out of the Silent Planet*, beautifully written as some of it is, does not seem quite to have grown from any conviction" (Swinerton 6).

From what readers know now of Lewis's Christian faith and his theories on writing, it may seem odd that one could miss his references to Christian doctrine. Christopher states that this is because the non-Christians who were first reading his books often had a more difficult time recognizing allusions to Christ outside of the Incarnation or direct Biblical reference (Christopher 93). However, since Lewis's Malacandrians have no knowledge of God's interaction with the Earth, such references to these Earthly events would have seemed horribly out of place. In a novel where the characters have a much different background knowledge from its readers, the author must do exactly what Lewis has done: discuss not what God has done on Earth, but explore the very *nature* of God. This story not only explains God's role in Man's life, but also examines who God

really is, His characteristics, and His temperament. Lewis's plan was to create a metaphor to carry Christian ideas, indeed the basic tenets of Christianity, into a fantasy without using the typical Christian symbols and images (Moorman 109).

Perhaps part of the reason that many critics did not recognize Lewis's techniques in this trilogy is that allegory is a literary device rarely used these days. Moreover, Christian allegory is not often found in such a genre as science fiction. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* are not merely exercises in allusion, which is often easier to identify. Rather, they are allegorical in that Lewis fashions his own story based on a plot line from another source. While allusions are merely references to certain events, lines, characters, and symbols in other works, allegory affects the entire plot structure of the novel. For example, *Perelandra* exhibits both allusion to and allegory of God's command to Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (Gen. 3:2). Early in his experiences on Perelandra, Ransom discovers a fruit tree from which he picks the most delicious fruit he has ever tasted. Although his first impulse is to eat more despite that his hunger has been satisfied, there is some sort of morality prompting him to refrain (*Pere* 42-3). While this event is reminiscent of the command to abstain from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the occurrence itself does not affect the plot, nor does it mirror that of Genesis. However, Ransom later finds that the inhabitants of Perelandra, who live continually on floating islands, are forbidden to spend the night on the Fixed Island. They may visit it, but Maleldil has commanded them to leave it before they fall asleep on it (*Pere* 74). This is quite similar to the command God gave to Adam and Eve concerning the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis. Because this event in *Perelandra* runs parallel to the Old Testament story and also bears upon the actual plot of

Lewis's novel, it is allegory. The fruit trees merely remind the reader of another fruit tree; the command about the Fixed Island and the following events related to this command tell a story very similar to the first few chapters of Genesis. Thus, the fruit trees are an allusion; the command about the Fixed Island serves as allegory.

Beginning with *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis uses allegory to tell his story. In this first book, the predominant example of this is the *eldila*. The *eldila* have roughly the same characteristics as the common idea of angels, specifically in their relation to God (Maleldil the Elder) and Christ (Maleldil the Young). In the novel, Ransom is told that Maleldil, who created and rules the Field of Arbol (the solar system), also created and rules the *eldila*. Maleldil gave each of the *eldila* specific realms over which to rule, and the Ransom hears the story of the fall of Satan, one of Maleldil's Oyarsa (a sort of arch-*eldil*) from a more universal, rather than earthly, viewpoint.

Yet although the reader can see how the *eldila* fit into the picture with Maleldil and *hnau* (rational beings, a category under which humans, *hrossa*, *sorns*, and *pfifltriggi* all fall), the image Lewis presents of them is quite different from what people usually imagine (See Appendix C). The *eldila* have no wings or halos, nor do they carry harps or sit on clouds. Rather, they are difficult to see, because they are not bound by a planet's gravitational pull as other beings are. Instead, they must fly very fast to keep up with the spinning of the planet in order to stay in the same place as a person. Hyoi, one of Ransom's *hross* friends, explains the *eldila* this way:

But *eldila* are hard to see. They are not like us. Light goes through them. You must be looking in the right place and the right time; and that is not likely to come about unless the *eldil* wishes to be seen. Sometimes you

can mistake them for a sunbeam or even a moving of the leaves; but when you look again you see that it was an *eldil* and that it is gone (*OSP* 76).

If Lewis wanted his readers to glean some sort of theology from his novel, however, why would he make his images so unusual? Certainly a reader who is used to angels resembling, for example, Michelangelo's paintings, would create a much clearer picture of these *eldila* if Lewis had described them similarly. But Lewis purposely avoided the typical ideas and images. If the *eldila* had been what readers already imagine, the story would require no imagination. In addition, such stock images would create a barrier between reality and fantasy because of the conscious step readers take when they are asked to picture something they know, or at least suspect to be false, accepted though it may be. Lewis's more abstract descriptions make the line between reality and fantasy a bit fuzzier. Since the reader is now faced with the idea that perhaps an angel is not so easily identifiable as he once thought, he must decide for himself which side of the reality/fantasy line the idea really falls. By creating a very different image in the mind of the reader, Lewis forces his readers to rethink their assumptions and prejudices.

This forced realignment of thought is the reason why *Out of the Silent Planet* makes such a great introductory piece to the Space Trilogy. The reader readjusts his stereotypes along with Ransom; this rethinking is so necessary because of the even more unusual occurrences in the following novels. In addition, this simple allegory between Maleldil and his relation to the Oyarsa, and God and his archangels and angels, serves as a sort of introduction to the more complex allegory that is to follow in the next novel.

In *Perelandra*, as in *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis blurs the line between reality and myth. Indeed, even Ransom, upon waking in this foreign world, "saw

reality, and thought it a dream" (*Pere* 45). Ransom immediately recognizes his surroundings, referring to them in his mind as "the garden of Hesperides," which is, in Greek mythology, the equivalent of the Bible's Garden of Eden (Downing 48). The plot of *Perelandra* is very familiar, for almost as soon as Ransom meets the Green Lady, readers recognize her as the Eve of the planet Venus, particularly when she declares to Ransom that she has no mother because "I *am* the Mother" (66). In fact, much of the novel runs directly parallel to the Garden of Eden story told in the book of Genesis. Lewis's inventive imagination, however, provides enough departures from the Old Testament story to make his own tale interesting and thought-provoking.

Allegorical correlations between *Perelandra* and Genesis abound. The first similarity the reader notices is the description of the planet itself. *Perelandra* is beautiful, unblemished, and perfect. Lewis's detailed description of the place enables the reader to envision the planet, with all its colors, in his own mind:

[Ransom] opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base of the indigo stem was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. . . . He sat up and saw, between the stems of the trees, that they were in calm water.

The sea looked like gilded glass (*Pere* 45).

While the Old Testament does not give such a detailed or colorful description of the Garden of Eden, one can imagine that an unfallen Earth would have been just as breathtaking as the *Perelandra* which Lewis describes. But Lewis uses visual imagery only as a way to lead his reader into the more complex imagery he is about to employ. He moves on to talk about the taste of the fruit, the feel of the rolling islands, and finally the state of mind of his characters. Ransom's reactions to his encounters help tell the story of the thought-processes of humanity in

general. As Lewis extends his allegory to Genesis with Ransom's exploration of the new planet, the psychological ramifications of being in an unfallen world, a phenomenon the Bible does not explain, become apparent. The recorder of Genesis was occupied with the actual events that took place in Eden. He did not discuss the unfallen world or the mindset of its inhabitants in detail, partly because he was not there to experience it and therefore did not know exactly what it was like, but more importantly because the point of the Scripture was not to examine what things used to be like before the Fall, but rather to discuss the effects of Eve's decision on humankind, Man's state of sin, and the effects of that sin.

However, Lewis considers the pre-lapsarian world in order to add to the reader's understanding of the effects of losing Paradise. Ransom's reactions to things on Perelandra are vastly different from those reactions he would have on Earth, because he is subconsciously prompted by the impression that this planet is different. For instance, when Ransom eats of the refreshing fruit he discovers early in his adventure, he is amazed at its magnificent taste. "It was," Lewis writes, "like the discovery of a totally new *genus* of pleasures . . . . It could not be classified." After eating the fruit, Ransom realizes that his hunger and thirst are gone, "and yet to repeat a pleasure so intense and almost so spiritual seemed an obvious thing to do." But something stops him from enjoying the pleasure again. He doesn't realize why, but Ransom feels that there would be something almost sinful in eating more when he was neither hungry nor thirsty. "Perhaps," he thinks, "the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity -- like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day" (42-3).

Ransom experiences a similar barrier to the repetition of a pleasure when he encounters the bubble-trees. Drawn to them by their glass-like appearance,



Ransom investigates their construction. He reaches out to touch one of the “shimmering globes” and

immediately his head, face, and shoulders were drenched with what seemed . . . an ice-cold shower bath, and his nostrils filled with a sharp, shrill, exquisite scent . . . . When he opened his eyes . . . all the colours about him seemed richer and the dimness of that world seemed clarified. A re-enchantment fell upon him. . . . Looking at a fine cluster of the bubbles which hung above his head he thought how easy it would be to get up and plunge oneself through the whole lot of them and feel, all at once, that magical refreshment multiplied tenfold. But he was restrained by the same sort of feeling which had restrained him over-night from tasting a second gourd (*Pere* 48).

Again, it is not that Ransom does not wish to repeat these incredible pleasures; however, a part of his conscious prevents him from doing so because, here on this perfect planet, it seems very wrong to do so. As in Ransom’s journey in the spaceship in *Out of the Silent Planet*, it is when Ransom tastes the fruit and his experiences the bubble-trees in Perelandra that Lewis goes beyond the ideas of the physicality of other worlds in order to explore the spiritual and psychological changes one might undergo, thus extending and embellishing the allegory he has created.

As in the book of Genesis, the Green Lady and her husband enjoy complete fellowship with God on Perelandra. In the Scripture, God converses directly with Adam and Eve, and they hear him clearly speaking to them:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." . . . And it was so (Gen. 1:28-30).

Here, God speaks directly to Adam and Eve; they know what God has given to them and they know what they are expected to do. Similarly, in *Perelandra*, the Green Lady hears clearly the words of Maleldil. Ransom is unable to hear what Maleldil says to her, but the Green Lady continually informs him that "Maleldil is telling me" one thing or another (*Pere* 61).

Once again, the reader sees the similarity to Genesis much later in the novel during the fight between Ransom and the Un-man. At the completion of the struggle, Ransom has crushed the head of the Un-man, but only after the Un-man has bitten his heel and creates a wound which, as we discover in *That Hideous Strength*, never heals. These injuries allude to Genesis 3:15, in which God curses the serpent after Adam and Eve have disobeyed God's command:

And I will put enmity  
     between you and the woman,  
     and between your offspring and hers;  
 he will crush your head,  
     and you will strike his heel.

Although greatly enriched by Lewis's imagination, these examples make it clear that, in writing *Perelandra*, Lewis creates a story with an allegory to the Garden of Eden account in the Old Testament.

There is a dual allegory in the text; not only do the Green Lady and her husband represent Eve and Adam, but also Ransom's role is also allegorical to Christ's. As Downing explains, there are several similarities between Ransom in this story and Jesus in the Gospels. First, both have entered naked into the world,

and they each are to fulfill God's purpose for that world. Each is tempted to give up his mission: Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matt 26:36-46) and Ransom as he fights with the idea of having to physically kill the Un-man (*Pere* 140-150). Ransom's experiences underwater and in the depths of the cave where he remains for three days are allusive to Christ's death and resurrection after the same amount of time. Each then comes out from the depths to be celebrated by others, and each then returns to his former sphere (Downing 51). In addition, Ransom must fight against the evil to save the humans of Perelandra just as Christ saved Earthly humanity from sin.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Lewis's dual allegories is how he intertwines the two into one story. The Christ figure here actually enters the Garden of Eden. His appearance does not serve to restore the world to the heart of God after a Fall, but to prevent a Fall altogether. Lewis goes far beyond mere allegory to create an intriguing account of what might happen elsewhere now that Christ's ultimate mission on Earth has been completed until the Second Coming.

In the account of the Perelandrian temptation, Lewis goes beyond what Genesis tells of Eve and the serpent to create his own interpretation. Perhaps he is speculating on the true nature of Eve's temptation by the serpent -- not the brief, cut-and-dried account of Genesis. Instead, Lewis imagines a great psychological struggle in which the Un-man rationalizes with the Green Lady, talking her into his point of view. Rather than lasting for just a few verses as in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:1-5), the debate between the Un-man and the Green Lady, with interjections from Ransom, lasts for nearly sixty pages, and makes up the predominant focus of the narrative. Far from making the woman seem unalterably prone to evil and carelessly responsible for the fall of her race, Lewis's narrative shows the Green Lady truly contemplating what would most

please her God and which decision would serve the best interests of her husband, herself, and her progeny. For six chapters, over one third of the novel, the Green Lady listens to both Ransom's and the Un-man's sides of the argument, considers each carefully, asks questions, and analyzes the answers. This is not the story of a flighty woman who makes a decision based on a whim. She realizes that the fate of her race is at stake (though perhaps she does not understand to what extent), and she carefully and deliberately contemplates the choice set before her. It is here that the reader begins to understand just what Eve's turmoil may have been in the book of Genesis. It is also here that the allegory of Christ's incarnation, battle with evil, death, and resurrection enters the novel. Ransom must prevent the Fall.

Although the battle remains a mental, rational fight for so long, it eventually turns into physical combat as Ransom realizes that "this can't go on" (145). Ransom at first detests the idea that he must actually *fight*, not merely argue with, the horrible, monstrous Un-man. But he begins to think of the Eve of his own world:

He did not know whether Eve had resisted at all, or if so, for how long. Still less did he know how the story would have ended if she had. If the "serpent" had been foiled, and returned the next day, and the next . . . what then? Would the trial have lasted forever? How would Maleldil have stopped it? (*Pere* 145).

Ransom finally realizes that in trying to determine what would have happened on Earth, he is merely avoiding the question of what he must do here on Perelandra. He must stop the Un-man, for it is ridiculous for this argument to continue. It must be ended, and Ransom is the one to end it. He understands finally that it is why he was sent to Perelandra.

But just as Ransom has trouble absorbing the idea of a physical battle with the evil one, so do some critics. Chapman believes that rather than engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the Un-man, Ransom should have performed an exorcism on him (14). But the reader must keep in mind that Ransom is not destroying the person of Weston, but the host for this demon (Gibson 55). Weston is no longer in this body. In seeing the animate body, Ransom is convinced that

this, in fact, was not a man: that Weston's body was kept, walking and undecaying, in Perelandra by some wholly different kind of life, and that Weston himself was gone (*Pere* 110).

Therefore, it is not out of maliciousness and hatred for Weston that Ransom fights and kills the body, but rather in fulfillment of his duty to fight the evil and prevent the Un-man from tricking the Green Lady into disobeying Maleldil.

Ransom realizes that in destroying the body of Weston, he will eliminate the host for the evil spirit which has been tempting the Green Lady. The evil spirit had entered Perelandra by Weston's invitation, and without his body, the spirit must be cast into "the deep," which horrifies unclean spirits, as Ransom remembers from reading his Bible (see Luke 8:31). However, the fight still terrifies him as he recalls his opponent's physical advantages: "The deadly cold of those hands . . . the long metallic nails . . . ripping off narrow strips of flesh, pulling out tendons. One would die slowly" (*Pere* 143). He is certain he will be killed, and his intellect fights with his faith in his decision, much as the Green Lady struggles with the two sides of the argument with which she is faced.

Ransom grasps at a hope that

perhaps he would fight and win, perhaps not even be badly mauled. But no faintest hint of a guarantee in that direction came to him from the darkness. The future was black as the night itself (*Pere* 147).

Then a Voice says to him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom"

(147). Ransom then spends a period of time musing about the philological history of his surname, until he is interrupted by the same Voice saying, "My name also is Ransom" (148). It is here that the novel's hero comes to understand fully the implications of this physical struggle:

If he were not the ransom, Another would be. . . . He had long known that great issues hung on his choice; but . . . he now realised the true width of the frightful freedom that was being put into his hands. . . . He sat before [the Lord] like Pilate. It lay with him to save or spill (148).

Ransom, knowing what he must do, then can resort only to the question, "Lord, why me?" (149). But to this, Ransom receives no answer, just as Christ received no response when, in the Gospel of Matthew, he begged, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matt 26:39). Ransom must save Perelandra much as Christ redeemed Earth.

The physical battle itself helps complete Lewis's allegory to Christ. The Gospels report that Jesus, too, spent a great deal of time on this planet, speaking to the people, rationalizing with them, and arguing against wrong ideas. But in the end, it came down to a physical struggle in the form of his crucifixion. Lewis completes the allegory with Ransom's seemingly unbearable pain and his descent into and rising out of the depths of the cave. Ransom has the never-healing wound in his heel to show for his battle, just as Jesus has his nail marks and the gash in his side which remain even after his resurrection (see John 20:20).

Although the story continues through yet another volume, the reader knows with the first sentence of *That Hideous Strength* that this book will prove to be very different from the preceding novels. While in most trilogies, the author maintains the same writing style and use of literary devices in each installment, Lewis's conclusion to his trilogy contradicts the reader's expectations. Unlike the first two novels, the narrative style in this last book, rather than involving its reader, seems to distance one from the characters in the story. This is strange because the setting is not on some other planet, but Earth. The primary characters are not *sorns* or *hrossa*, not even the Mother and Father of a young world; instead, they are a newly married couple experiencing the struggles of day-to-day living. Married only six months at the commencement of this story, Jane Studdock struggles with living at home and taking care of the housework and of her husband Mark. He, meanwhile, spends most of his time trying to get into the "in crowd" at Bracton College, where he has recently been made a fellow. Because Jane is in the process of working on her doctoral thesis on Donne, she especially resents Mark's constant absence from the home where he is supposed to provide her with the "mutual society, help, and comfort" they had pledged each other in their wedding vows. Instead, she feels that "in reality marriage had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement" (*THS* 13). The story begins with this description of her dull life, and goes on to give a similarly unexciting account of Mark's work at the College though a description of a College Meeting. These characters are a far cry from the incredible creatures of Lewis's other worlds.

*That Hideous Strength* is not vivid with descriptions of flights through space and encounters with various rational but fantastic species native to other

planets, nor does it expound upon physical battles with the embodiment of evil; rather the narrator tells of the mundane, everyday goings-on in a little college town. There is the back-stabbing nature of the fellows of Bracton, the new company (nobody is really certain who or what the N.I.C.E. is) that seeks development in the town of Edgestow, and the relationships of Jane and Mark to other people in the college and in the town. While these elements seem to be perfect for a daytime soap-opera, they hardly seem appropriate for the conclusion of a science fiction trilogy. And even though fantastic things do eventually occur (such as Jane's strangely prophetic dreams, Mark's introduction to the "Head" of the N.I.C.E., and the appearance of Merlin toward the end of the novel), such things are nothing like the other-worldly science fiction adventures in *Out of the Silent Planet* or *Perelandra*.

In this third novel, Lewis changes his usage of literary devices as much as his style of narration. *That Hideous Strength* is full of allusions to Greek and Roman mythology and Arthurian legend, but while the thrust of the story remains grounded in Christian doctrine, the author uses far less allegory than in the other two books. Indeed, much analysis and criticism has been written about the references to the Legend of King Arthur, the significance of the character of Merlin, and the symbolism of the names of the characters both in the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.) and in the Company at St. Anne's, but very few Lewis scholars even mention the topic of Christian allegory in this last of the three novels. The reason for this lack of such reference is simple: Christian allegory simply is not present in *That Hideous Strength*. There is certainly Christian based symbolism in some of the names and situations, as well as allusions (sometimes very heavy-handed allusions, as in the Tower of Babel re-enactment) to both the New and the Old Testaments of the Bible, but the



allegory has been left behind. There are no stories that Lewis takes from Scripture to fashion into his own fiction. There are no parallel plots between the Bible and *That Hideous Strength*. Lewis has almost completely changed his style in this last book.

Lewis has very specific goals of teaching doctrine in his first two books, and he masterfully accomplishes this aim through his allegorical style. In *That Hideous Strength*, however, Lewis drastically alters his method. So why would this author, after such success in accomplishing his didactic goals in the first two-thirds of the trilogy, decide to make such a drastic departure from what worked so well for him? His style changes because his goals change. Lewis's intentions for *That Hideous Strength* differ vastly from his intentions for the first two novels; therefore, he must change the way he goes about telling the story.

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis lays a doctrinal groundwork. This book serves as not only the initiation into Lewis's trilogy, but also the start of a lesson. In this novel, Lewis makes it clear that there truly is Good and Evil. The lines of morality, the idea of what is Right and what is Wrong, are not human inventions, and Good and Evil are not bound to just the Earth, but rather they extend throughout the entire universe. This universality is made evident by Lewis's decision to set *Out of the Silent Planet* in a world that his readers have only imagined: Mars. The *hrossa*, and especially the *sorns*, explain to Ransom that they, too, are bound by the same moral laws as he is, although they may understand them differently. Lewis also makes clear that there is a God, and He also is universal, far larger than the human mind can comprehend, and, again, certainly not a creation of Man's imagination. This God rules over the entire universe, not just one planet. In Ransom's discussion with the *hrossa* about the

Oyarsa, and in his attempt to discern who this creature is, he asks his friends if Oyarsa created the world. In response,

the *hrossa* almost barked in the fervour of their denial. Did people in Thulcandra [Earth] not know that Maleldil the Young had made and still ruled the world? Even a child knew that (*OSP* 68).

Through such passages, Lewis emphasizes that God is larger than humans can imagine, that the laws of God extend to the farthest regions of the universe, and the lines of Good and Evil are indelible. By laying this groundwork, Lewis uses *Out of the Silent Planet* to teach the basics of morality.

*Perelandra* goes a bit further with the lesson. Lewis explains why there was a Fall on the planet Earth: The malicious intent of the Evil One caused him to tempt the woman until she could withstand him no longer. He shows that the motive of the Evil One is to separate rational beings from God just as he is separated. Through the logical arguments of the Un-man in this story, Lewis gives his readers an idea of the tactics that he believes the serpent may have used on Eve, and that Satan may still use on people even now, in order to convince his prey to deny God. The Un-man's logic seems flawless. For example, in his attempt to get the Green Lady to spend the night on the Fixed Island although Maleldil has commanded her not to, he says:

These other commands -- to love, to sleep, to fill this world with your children -- you see for yourself that they are good. And they are the same in all worlds. But the command against living on the Fixed Island is not so. You have already learned that He gave no such command to my world. And you cannot see where the goodness of it is. No wonder. If it were really good, must He not have commanded it to all worlds alike? For how could Maleldil not command what was good? There is *no* good in it.

Maleldil Himself is showing you that, this moment, through your own reason. It is mere command. It is forbidding for the sake of forbidding.

... [He gave this command] in order that you may break it (*Pere* 117).

Lewis gives this and many other examples of the Un-man's logical rhetoric to show that even what is blatantly against the will of God can be stated so eloquently that it seems the right thing to do. In this way, Lewis examines the manner in which humans struggle to make their wills conform to that of the Good side of the battle--and Lewis also makes it very clear through both the verbal and physical confrontations between Ransom and the Un-man that there is a real war against Evil taking place. He demonstrates the consequences of the Fall that took place on Earth through the experiences of the Green Lady. When the Un-man dresses the Green Lady in feathers and has her look at herself in a mirror, she is astonished by seeing her own face "out there--looking at me. . . . [My] heart is beating too hard. I am not warm. What is it?" she asks. When the Un-man tells her that she is experiencing Fear, but that although she does not like it, the Fear will go away, Ransom exclaims, "It will never go away if you do what he wishes. It is into more and more fear that he is leading you" (*Pere* 136-7). Lewis reminds his readers of the Bible's teachings that as a result of Eve's decision to do what the Serpent told her, Mankind was led into unending Fear and separation from God. Only through a Redeemer could the people of Earth be set free from this Fear and separation. By examining the history of this pre-lapsarian world of Perelandra, Lewis attempts to convince his readers of the consequences of Earth's Fall and the similar need for a Redeemer.

When *That Hideous Strength* returns its readers to the planet Earth, Lewis assumes the lessons of the first two novels have been learned, and he now applies this knowledge to everyday life. *That Hideous Strength* deals with the roles that

Right and Wrong, Good and Evil play in the real world. This is the story of how morality and ethics affect real people; this is how it all plays out on this planet. Lewis is, in effect, saying, "Now that you have this knowledge of the choice you have to make and the consequences of the decisions of your ancestors, this is what it means to *your* life."

By placing this final episode on Earth, in a place with which his readers can easily identify, Lewis illustrates how all that he has talked about before ties in to the experiences of his readers. Certainly most readers can relate to Mark and Jane, for they are two of the most ordinary people in the world, living ordinary lives. Strange, then, that the reader feels distanced from them in comparison to the sympathy felt for the creatures in the other novels. Perhaps this change in relationship between reader and character is the result of Lewis's change in method. The reader feels closer to the *eldila* and especially the Green Lady because, albeit in another form, he has already read this story, already knows these characters. Mark and Jane, ordinary as they may be, are new to the reader. Plus, they are extremely complex and therefore difficult to understand. Lewis solves this problem by involving these ordinary characters in such extraordinary occurrences that, although by the middle of the novel the reader may no longer be able to identify completely with Mark and Jane, one can see how the war between Good and Evil affects even the most mundane parts of life.

Mark and Jane are on opposite teams. Mark, through the College, has been roped in to the side of the N.I.C.E., the side of Evil. Jane, however, is pulled toward the Company at St. Anne's, which is the side of Good. Throughout the novel, the two are at odds with each other, Mark attempting to bring Jane over to "his" side as the Deputy Director and others in charge of the N.I.C.E. wish him to, and Jane trying to stay away from that very thing which her dreams have told her

is the least desirable option, regardless of her husband's involvement in it. In the end, after much upheaval on both sides caused by the appearance of Merlin, Mark escapes the N.I.C.E., which by this time he has seen for the evil that it is, and he returns to his wife.

The Bible holds no story from which Lewis crafted this novel. *That Hideous Strength* is not an allegory of anything Scriptural. It was not necessary for the author to continue an allegory, because he finished it with *Perelandra*. In *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis extends the known tale into his ideal culmination of the history of Christianity. The events Lewis describes in *That Hideous Strength* have not happened yet. In this final story, Lewis imagines the demise of all that is evil (shown in the figurative and literal collapse of the N.I.C.E.), and the re-emergence of all that is good (indicated by the reunion of Mark and Jane). The reconciliation within the Studdocks' marriage symbolizes the ultimate end which the world has not yet experienced. Lewis is saying here that when all else has passed away, Love remains, and it is the fulfillment of all that should be.

In only three novels, which together comprise less than eight hundred pages, Lewis covers an incredible amount of ground. He starts before the creation of the Earth by contemplating Satan's fall and its effects on the universe. He continues through the Garden of Eden, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and concludes by considering an ideal ending to the plot. Instead of writing didactic sermons or apologetic essays, however, Lewis uses allegorical fiction to encourage his readers to think of the story in a new way, to examine it, and to apply it to their own lives.



## **Appendix A**

### **An Original Allegory**

“He’s coming back! The King is on his way!” The dust rose around him as the boy raced through the streets of the village, crying the news. For an instant, the townspeople just looked at the cloud that trailed behind the boy. Then they returned to their business, some nodding in agreement, some shaking their heads in disbelief, and others asking their friends if it was really true.

“What was that all about?” the traveler asked his companion.

The man shrugged. “Oh, there’s a bit of a rumor going around. Some man is down by the river front telling everybody that the King is returning. Quite a dynamic speaker, I expect, judging by the crowds he’s drawing.”

“But who is he?” the traveler asked as the two of them dodged passersby on their way down the street. “And where has the King been, anyway?”

The man patted his donkey with a chuckle. “Well, nobody really knows the answer to either of those questions. Some say the man at the river is the King’s own messenger, or even one of his noblemen. Others contend he’s an enemy from a neighboring Kingdom, stirring up trouble. Still more think he’s a mere lunatic.”

“But what about the King?” the traveler asked. “How long has he been gone? And why did he leave?”

The man laughed and mounted his donkey. “The answers to those questions lie in a time long ago, and I confess that I have not lived here long enough to know the answers. And here is where our paths part. Just ahead on the right is the best inn this town’s got.” The traveler followed the man’s glance to a dilapidated two story building which was badly in need of paint and shelter from any strong winds. “Okay,” the man conceded sheepishly. “It’s the town’s only inn, and it doesn’t look too great. But the



innkeeper and his wife are capital folks. And the innkeeper's old mother lives with them. Perhaps she can answer your questions about the King."

The traveler reached out to shake the man's hand. "Thanks for your help," the traveler said.

The man grinned and waved as he gave his donkey a gentle kick in the sides and continued on his way.

The traveler, though weary from his long journey, felt energized by the man's good humor and the excitement of the townspeople. He gave a happy sigh and set his sights on the inn up ahead. He shifted the load on his back and continued on.

The innkeeper's wife greeted the traveler at the door. "Need some shelter?" she asked pleasantly in response to his smile.

"Yes, for a few days."

"Well, come right in! We still have a couple of vacancies." She led him to the front desk where he momentarily dropped his pack on the floor while she took his name. "Don't expect the place to be empty for long, though. My wager is that you got here just in time."

"Oh really?" he replied. "Why's that?"

"Haven't you heard about the man who claims the King is returning? People are coming from all over the Kingdom—some to welcome him back, others to see if it's true, most just to meet this stranger for themselves."

As she led him up the stairs, the traveler asked, "How long has the King been gone?"

"A terribly long time," she answered. "In fact, there are very few left in the village who even remember the King from personal experience. We've continued to live under his laws since he left, but only the very old can recall his actual presence. Well,

here's your room, sir," the woman smiled as she opened the door. "Enjoy your time here, and let us know if you need anything."

"Actually, there is one thing."

"Yes?"

"Well," traveler began, looking a little sheepish, "I must admit that all the commotion about the King and this man at the river has piqued my curiosity. I was told there was someone here who might be able to give me a bit more detail."

"I'm sure you're referring to my mother in law. she says she remembers the King. Many believe here to be the oldest woman in the village--perhaps in the entire Kingdom." The innkeeper's wife smiled. "And she loves to talk about him. She continues to have great respect and love for him despite his long absence. It's late, though, and she would not be able to talk to you now."

"Quite all right," the traveler replied. "I'm a bit worn out from my journey now anyway. A warm bath and a soft bed sound the most appealing to me at the moment."

"That we can provide," she laughed. "And perhaps tomorrow you can speak with my mother in law."

"Thank you. That would be wonderful."

"Good night, sir."

\* \* \*

"So you're curious about the King, eh?" the old woman asked. "You're not from these parts?"

"No, I was just passing through on my way to Clivia when I heard the commotion," the traveler replied. The innkeeper's wife had set up this interview for him, and he was anxious to hear all the old woman had to say concerning the absent ruler of the nation. "Although I'm not a citizen of this Kingdom, I am for some reason incredibly

curious about where your King has been for so long and why he has chosen now to return.”

“Well, make yourself comfortable, son, and I will tell you what I know.”

Her eyes sparkled as her story began:

*King Edward has been ruler over this nation for many many years. No one now living can remember a king before him. He is the wisest King in all the world. Many years ago, however, when I was a very little girl, a few people in the Kingdom began to grumble about his rules. Indeed, King Edward keeps strict laws for his people. The people began to forget that he did this for their benefit and protection; they claimed he was unjust and entirely too demanding. They began to revolt. The King was very merciful to the people and he showed them forbearance even when it was not called for.*

*Even this kind King, however, had to punish some of the people who were acting against his ruling and inciting others to do the same. The Kingdom was divided; some people believed King Edward was right to discipline his people as he did, but some thought he should give the people the freedom to do whatever they wished, and continue to give them all the privileges of being a part of his Kingdom despite what rules they chose to obey or defy. The entire nation was in an uproar. Neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend. The King's messengers and even his noblemen came among the people, even in the smallest villages, to try to reason with them and to re-establish unity. (King Edward, you see, does not wish to force people to obey him, but neither will he give rights and privileges to those who disobey.)*

*This controversy lasted several years, when suddenly, people realized they hadn't heard from King Edward in a very long time. He had made no new decrees, no statements to the public, and even his messengers brought no news of him. The Kingdom became very quiet. The arguments ceased, and we all began to wonder where the King*

*had gone. We tried to remember the last thing he had told us. We had been so concerned with ourselves that we actually forgot about him. The teachers and historians consulted, and it was agreed that his last public statement was this:*

***“Fear not, for I will establish a new Kingdom for you.”***

*Yes, a new Kingdom. We all memorized this decree, for it is the promise we hold dear to our hearts. The King does not break his promises. I know he will return and establish his new Kingdom, and it will be better than the last. There will be no arguing, no suffering, and King Edward will reign uncontested.*

The old woman’s face was nearly glowing as she finished her story. Even the gray wisps of hair around her face resembled a cloud of light. The traveler was hesitant to ask questions of her, for he feared ruining this happy state she was in. Yet his curiosity prodded him.

“You have been without a King, then, for these many years?” he asked.

“King Edward has not been here, but he is still our King. We are still under his rule.”

“No one has heard from him at all since he disappeared?”

“No. He has remained quiet.”

“Have you--” the traveler was uncertain whether to ask the next question, but he went against his doubt to inquire. “Have you ever considered that the King possibly. . . well, perhaps that he. . . died?”

Unexpectedly, the woman laughed, not contemptuously, but almost with joy. “Well, certainly, young man. That thought has entered the mind of every person in this Kingdom. But if he were dead, we surely would have gotten word. Besides, we have faith that he will accomplish what he promised.”

“And this man at the river—who do you think he is? Do you believe what he says?”

“It is what we have hoped for all these years,” she answered soberly. “It is very easy to get one’s hopes up, but difficult to guard oneself against disappointment. Believe him? I am not yet certain. But my hope remains as strong as always. We shall see what happens.”

\* \* \*

“Are you following his laws?” asked the man of the crowd. “Do you truly submit everything to the statutes King Edward has set forth? Now is the time to change your ways if they do not coincide with the King’s commands. The promise of the new Kingdom is about to be fulfilled!”

The people applauded and cheered. The traveler was impressed. A man who could excite people both in joyous celebration and in sober admission of their faults was rare. Surely this man was one of a kind.

Rumors went about that this man was the King in disguise, for who else could know the law as well as he or possess such great wisdom about the new Kingdom? But the man denied it. “I am merely a messenger telling you of his coming! Prepare yourselves, for he will come soon!” Something in the distance caught the man’s eye, and the crowd followed his teary gaze. “See! I have told you,” the man said, almost to himself. Unexpectedly, he broke into a run to meet another man who had been walking toward the river. The traveler mused that the two greeted each other as old friends would: the one nearly tackling the other in a hug, and both laughing with joy at seeing one another. They walked back toward the crowd, the one beaming, the other with a more sober look. The latter was the newcomer, whose smile was that of a man about to begin the greatest task on earth—the one he had lived his whole life to accomplish. The

traveler noted the confidence in his walk, the strength of his arms, the gleam in his eyes, but mostly the sense of peace and purpose that permeated his entire being.

“My fellow citizens of the Kingdom belonging to King Edward,” the messenger announced. “Now you meet him who will establish the new Kingdom: Jonah.”

### Comment on the Original Allegory

After reading over the allegory I had written, I began to wonder if it truly was an allegory. Certain characteristics of my writing did not seem to fit with the way C. S. Lewis wrote, and since his work is considered an allegory, perhaps mine does not fit the definition. The reasoning behind my doubts follows.

In an allegory, the representations are supposed to be *abstract* things shown in a *concrete* way. (Like evil represented by a person, temptation represented by a tree, etc.) In mine, people are represented by people and basically the same story is told, person for person, without abstract ideas being presented. Therefore, the story does not evoke the dual interest it should (that of both the story and the ideas it represents) because the concrete things (people) stand for other concrete things (people.) However, the story is told in a slightly different way, so perhaps it does fit the actual definition of allegory; if it is allegory, however, it is very bad allegory.

This exercise, besides showing my complete lack of skill in creative writing, taught me that creating allegory is extremely difficult. The author must draw from an existing story, but must make the story interesting in itself. The plot must parallel the existing plot, but there must be differences so that the new story is not merely a retelling. As a result of this exercise, my admiration for C. S. Lewis has grown, for he parallels the Scriptures, but in a way that interests the reader and even adds meaning to the well-known tales of the Old and New Testaments.

## **Appendix B**



### **A Study of Allusion**

As I began to study allegory and what it means and how it is created, I began to question the difference between it and allusion. After determining a definition for each, I decided to examine the difference between the creation of the two literary devices. Therefore, just as I wrote an allegorical story, I wrote a piece of short fiction that included several allusions. I wanted to see if the task was easier or more difficult than the attempt at allegory. Included in this thesis, therefore, is my allusive fiction and my comment on it.

In addition, I have long had a theory that readers often look into fiction so deeply into the works they read that they find meaning in the work that the author did not intend. Also, I suspected that readers often miss allusions that the author did intend. As I was a teaching associate for an English 210 class at the time I wrote the following allusive fiction, the students in the class read the work and were asked to examine it. Their responses intrigued and amused me, and my reactions to this experience also are included in this appendix.

### **A Piece of Allusive Fiction**

Paula breathed in the autumn air as she strolled down McKinley Avenue on her way home. Today had been a trying day of classes, and she had just come from a meeting with her advisor in which the two of them discussed her ever-changing graduation date. Some days she wondered if life wouldn't have been easier if, after high school, she had just pumped gasoline until she met the man of her dreams. Perhaps easier, she decided, but not nearly as exciting.

But now Paula was glad to be finished for the day, and since it was ten minutes after the hour and most students were in their classes, she could take her time walking home, not having to worry about being jostled about by other students in a hurry or being run over by reckless bikers. She strolled along, realizing that this would be one of the last nice days of the year. The mornings already bit her fingertips with cold.

As she walked, she allowed her mind to wander. The gaggle of students on the steps of Teacher's College caught her ear. Paula noticed that there always seemed to be at least a dozen there, sitting on the steps, talking, discussing, or arguing what the teacher had said and how it compares to what other professors had said in the past. How they had time to sit and gab all day, Paula never succeeded in discerning.

Passing through the Quad was always her favorite part of the journey to her house. She loved to watch the students leaning against the trees, catching up on studies between their classes, and there always seemed to be somebody there playing a guitar and singing. Today, one class of eager students had convinced their professor to take advantage of the warm day while it lasted; he gave his lecture crouched on a little hill, his pupils around him in a semi-circle, studiously taking notes. The two girls at the back sharing a bagel reminded Paula that it was nearly 2:30 and she hadn't eaten lunch yet. She picked up her pace slightly.

She intended to go straight home, but as she passed the statue of Beneficence, a group of three young men caught her eye. She knew them—or at least, it seemed she knew them. Yes, indeed: one of them, the one in the middle, was her friend Ben, a fellow student with whom she had taken several classes. The bright sun reflecting off his white T-shirt blinded her so that she almost couldn't see clearly enough to tell who the others were, but on walking a bit closer to them, she realized that Ben was flanked by two old friends of theirs, Joe and Andrew. This confused her a bit because the two of them had graduated several years ago and Paula thought they were long gone from Muncie. Curious as she was, however, she decided not to intrude upon their conversation; they seemed to be discussing something of utmost importance. She didn't need to know just now, anyway. She would just ask Ben about it the next time she saw him.

"Now, finally for a little rest!" Paula said to herself as she dropped her backpack inside the door of her house. She plopped down on the couch and tried not to think about the paper she had promised to turn in to her professor by the end of the week. This thesis was going to drive her crazy — that is, if filling out her student teaching application didn't do it to her first.

"Maybe pumping gasoline wouldn't be such a bad option even now!" she thought with a sigh.

### **Comment on the Allusive Fiction**

I had thought upon the commencement of this exercise that it would be at least as hard to make allusions to something as it was to write an allegory about it. Now that I have completed the assignment, however, I have changed my mind. The allusion was much easier than the allegory. In the allegory, I had to try to make the whole story fit with another, already existing story, and yet hide the existing story within the original in a way so crafty that it would not be obvious, but yet still be identifiable. I was amazed at how difficult that task proved to be.

When embarking upon the task of writing an allusive story, however, I discovered that most of the confines of the allegory are not present in allusion. I did not have to worry about following a story line. I could create my own, and throw in a reference to something wherever I had the inclination, without having to be terribly concerned with its placement. In addition, once the reference was made, I had no obligation to continue with it. I could drop it there and allow the reader to get out of it what he may. It was not even terribly difficult to include several references, some more obvious than others, in the same work. In fact, it seemed easy enough that I can now see why Eliot got such joy out of making allusion after allusion in his "Wasteland." In addition, because I did not have to extend the allusion past a mere reference, it was much easier to keep them from being as blatant as my attempt at allegory was. At one point, I had tried to extend the allusion a bit, but I noticed that it was getting really obvious, so I decided to drop it a bit earlier than I had intended. That is much harder, if not impossible, to do with an allegory. The author cannot just drop it; the allegory must follow through the entire story. The ability to abandon the allusion and leave it at a mere mention makes it not only easier to write, but easier to mask.

### **A Reader Response to the Allusive Fiction**

In presenting my allusive fiction to the English 210 class for which I am a teaching associate, I was quite intrigued by the response of the members of the class to my work. Since Dr. Fisher and I allowed them to read it without telling them that I wrote it, the students were able to discuss the work without thinking they would offend anyone. Some of their responses were not what I expected, and that fact made them all the more interesting.

The first question the students were to answer was "What does this mean?" I found Dr. Fisher's question even a little humorous, because I did not intend the work to mean anything in particular; it was merely an exercise in allusions. They suggested such ideas as the frustration and confusion in the life of a soon-to-be-graduating college student who, despite this daily turmoil, believes college really is worth it after all. The main preoccupations of the students were the flat characters and the lack of plot, though they did talk a bit about the imagery, such as the "gaggle of students" and the mornings that "bit her fingertips with cold." One of their concerns was that I referred to the geography of the campus in a way that would exclude the reader who had not attended Ball State.

I found it very interesting that, through the discussion, the students did not even see the allusions until after my authorship was revealed and my intent stated. I had thought my references were pretty obvious, but apparently not to this group of students. I at first attributed that to the fact that most of the students in the class are sophomores and have not had much experience in looking for allusions and symbolism, but upon realizing that there is one senior in the class who also did not spot the allusions, my theory was shot down. Once the first allusion (the dozen students gathered at Teacher's College) was pointed out, however, they took off and were generally able to point out other things. They caught the Sermon on the Mount allusion pretty easily, although I was very

surprised they did not see that one the first time around. The reference to the Transfiguration totally flew by them, even when Dr. Fisher asked them to look closely at that particular passage. This I feel forced to attribute to a lack of knowledge of Scripture, because after explaining it, many students still looked puzzled.

What I found the most intriguing was the way students found things in the text that I did not intentionally put there. In discussing the numbers I used (twelve, three), one student said he believed a gaggle equaled seven, also a highly symbolic and Biblical number. (While I did not find that definition in the dictionary, this incident begins to show how readers see things unintended by the author.) Another student believed she had found an allusion at the end of the writing in Paula's statement about "rest," thinking it referred to the day of rest (the Sabbath) provided when God took his rest after creating the world. Again, I did not intend that, but I can see how she would get that idea from the text, especially after looking so intensely for Biblical allusions.

The experience of showing my work to objective readers was a very good one, because it showed me how the readers can either completely miss the allusions or symbolism you put in the work, or read more into the text than you intended.

## **Appendix C**

### **Angels and *Eldila***

As a participant in Ball State's Student Symposium in February of 1997, I presented part of my thesis in a display. Since I was, at the time, intent on the first book of the trilogy, I focused my display on that section. I examined the difference between stock images of angels and Lewis's descriptions of *eldila* and presented pictures of each, explaining why Lewis made the choice he did in creating these creatures. What follows is a small portion of the results of this extended research.

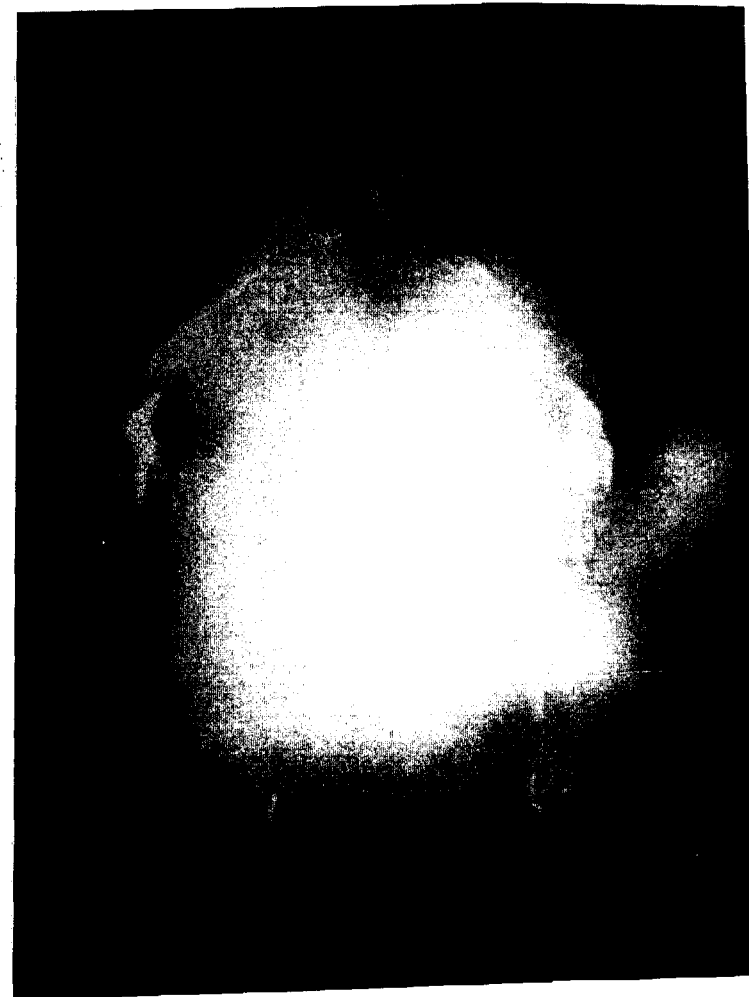


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On the left is an icon showing the Archangel Gabriel (Wilson 29). His wings and halo are typical of drawings of angels. On the right is artist William Munson's idea of an *eldil*. This *eldil*'s predominant feature is the light which it embodies, for as Hvoi tells Ransom, "Light goes through them. You must be looking in the right place and the right time; and that is not likely to come about unless the *eldil* wishes to be seen. Sometimes you can mistake them for a sunbeam or even a moving of the leaves; but when you look again you see that it was an *eldil* and that it is gone" (OSP 76).



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